

SAINT LAWRENCE AND SAINT STEPHEN

Tilman Riemenschneider (about 1460 - 1531)

SAINT LAWRENCE (37½ inches)

SAINT STEPHEN (36½ inches)

The Cleveland Museum of Art has acquired two rare sculptures by Tilman Riemenschneider. They are outstanding examples of this late German Gothic sculptor's style. Carved in linden wood between 1502 and 1510 and retaining significant amounts of original polychromy, they make a magnificent complement to the roughly contemporary and equally important small alabaster group of SAINT JEROME AND THE LION by this same artist which the Museum acquired in 1946. The new accessions represent SAINT LAWRENCE and SAINT STEPHEN and they were formerly in the R. von Passavant-Gontard collection in Frankfurt-am-Main and were later in the C. V. Pannwitz collection at Bennebroek. They were purchased from the Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Bequest. Originally they formed a part of an altarpiece dedicated to all saints in the church of the Dominican muns in Rothenburg until its demolition in 1813.

Tilman Riemenschneider (about 1460-1531) was one of the foremost masters of the late Gothic style. He worked principally in Würzburg although he was commissioned to do important works in Munsterstadt, Dettwang, Rothenburg, Creglingen, and other centers. His best work of his mature years combines several features which are clearly hall-marks of his style: his individual emphasis on a tender, melancholy attitude and facial expression, a figured grace enriched and yet partially obscured by rich drapery folds and animated play of light and dark, a realism of detail in the modelling of the hands and faces, and a strongly curvilinear and deeply undercut treatment of the hair. These features combined with a compositional use of mass and line are responsible for the distinctive, dramatic and eloquent effect which may be observed not only in his complete altarpieces but also in many of the single figures from altarpieces which were largely destroyed. The Museum's new acquisitions are superb examples of the latter.